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# The PALIMPSEST

MAY 1935

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THE EDITOR

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### THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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### THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## Pioneer Learning

When the Northwest Territory was established in 1787, thoughtful leaders, realizing that religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, declared that schools and the means of education should forever be encouraged. Later, when the pioneers crossed the plains in their trek westward, they were seeking adventure, homes, comforts, and riches. But more, they were also seeking a land of freedom and learning — a land where their children might have better advantages than they, and where their children's children might run and play with the freedom of a running brook, and grow in stature and in knowledge. Confronted with the stern realities of life, they nevertheless had visions of a new and better day. The way, they believed, lay through the valley of hard work and over the hill of learning.

Young Berryman Jennings was the first school teacher in all the vast region north of Missouri



and west of the Mississippi River. Jennings was a Kentuckian by birth and a frontiersman by choice. Born in the blue grass region in 1807, he had moved to the prairies of Illinois and at the age of twenty had established his residence at the little town of Commerce, which later came to be Nauvoo. Commerce was at that time an outpost of the advancing civilization. In 1829, however, Dr. Isaac Galland, a physician and a "man of many activities and enterprizes", pushed the frontier further westward, crossed the Mississippi with his family and made settlement at Ahwipetuck, the present site of Galland. As other settlers arrived, interest in education developed, and in 1830 Dr. Galland recrossed the river and hired young Jennings to teach the first school in Iowa-land. As compensation for his services the school master received his board and lodging at the Galland home, and the use of the doctor's rather limited medical library.

It is a fair assumption that Berryman Jennings "must have been a sprightly lad, and educated beyond his fellows", else Dr. Galland, who had studied literature and art as well as medicine, would not have selected him to instruct the youth of the newly established settlement. But perhaps more pertinent is the comment of James W. Campbell, one of the pupils of that first school, who



many years later said of his teacher: "I remember him well, for when kind and oft-repeated words failed to impress upon the memory of Washington Galland and myself the difference between A and B, he had neither delicacy nor hesitancy about applying the rod, which usually brightened our intellects."

The first schoolhouse in Iowa was a little log building ten feet by twelve feet in dimensions — a typical pioneer cabin — located on the bank of the Mississippi. After the building had been used for a time for educational purposes it was converted into a little kitchen for a pioneer family. Still later it served for a time as a shelter for livestock. Eventually it fell into decay and was used for firewood. Even the site on which that little structure stood has now disappeared, having been submerged by the Father of Waters when the great Keokuk dam was built. Only a native boulder and a bronze tablet at a point nearby mark the approximate site of the building. Plans are now being considered to construct a replica of that historic building, to the end that the youth of Iowa may better visualize educational beginnings in their Commonwealth. Meanwhile other school buildings have been erected — thousands of them — more stately than the first. In the expansion of these material structures we see the evolution of



things cultural — a growth and development which characterize the educational advancement of a century.

Schools in Iowa were first established as private ventures, sponsored by those who were interested in providing educational advantages for their own children. When the first schools were opened there were no school laws — indeed, no laws of any kind — applicable to the Iowa country. In 1834 the region west of the Mississippi was attached to the Territory of Michigan. Thenceforth the school laws of Michigan were applicable. Moreover, the legislation of the Territory of Michigan may be traced to the influence of New England. At a later date, after Iowa had become a separate Territory, Iowa laws were adopted in a similar manner from the Michigan statutes. This sometimes led to obvious incongruities. Thus the law of 1840 made reference to a "superintendent of public instruction" to whom the clerk of the district court in each county should report annually. But in reality there was at that time no office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in Iowa, and so it was quite impossible to carry this provision into effect. It was not until 1841 that this office was established. Even then it appears to have been created more to conform with the law of the previous year than because of



any existing need. The work was of a clerical nature. No mention was made of control over instruction, and the office was discontinued the next year.

If we move forward a decade in the history of the Commonwealth, we will note that better school laws were being enacted and that pioneer learning and the means of education were moving steadily westward. In October, 1851, the electors of school district number three of Iowa City Township in Johnson County "met and elected" officers. About a year later an election was held to authorize a tax for the erection of a building "of such size and dimensions" as the building committee might think proper. The new building was ready for occupancy by June 1, 1853.

The compensation of teachers in those early days is worthy of note. District number three of Iowa City paid teachers twenty-four dollars during the year 1849; in 1850 thirty-seven dollars; in 1851 thirty dollars; and at the close of the year 1852 the secretary declared that he had advanced six and a half dollars to meet a deficit. In October, 1855, twenty dollars of the funds available were retained for a "summer school", while for the winter term it was requested that each scholar furnish one-half cord of wood "already cut for the stove". In 1857 one-half the expense of maintain-



ing the school was assessed to the pupils attending.

In his *History of Education in Iowa*, Clarence Ray Aurner reminds us that for more than a decade after the close of the Territorial period "there were teachers in all communities acting on their own account and collecting a fee from each child taught". In some communities they were paid in part from the proceeds of a "rate bill" — receiving at the same time some remuneration from "boarding around". During this period property did not support the public schools and provide for the education of all children under laws that systematized the work of district organization, supervision, and maintenance. On the contrary the teachers of those early days "made their own systems, recommended their own kind of text-books, manufactured their own apparatus, and collected their own bills."

The text-books used in the early Iowa schools were little more than a heterogeneous collection acquired from a variety of sources. Indeed, almost any book was acceptable for school purposes, since the supply was exceedingly limited. In many communities the books used were those which had been purchased for the schools in other States, for on emigrating to Iowa the pioneer family usually included text-books as a part of the well-selected baggage. In keeping with the spirit



of the pioneer, when the district school was opened the books of the neighborhood were collected and used without much regard to uniformity, adaptability, or content. McGuffey's readers were perhaps the most common of texts, while the arithmetic might be Ray's or perchance Colburn and Perkins's. The grammar, if indeed a grammar were used, might be Wells's or Greene's or Bullion's or Pinneo's — little matter so long as it was a grammar.

The course of study in the pioneer school was limited in scope, the three R's — "reading", "riting", and "rithmetic" — being the basic subjects. One should not forget spelling, however, for now and again the old spelling school came to be the center of interest. The contest might be one between the Oak Grove school and the Sun Prairie district as described by Hamlin Garland in *Boy Life on the Prairie*.

The crowd having assembled, Jim and Henry, each representing one of the opposing schools, "stepped out into the middle of the room and received the broom from the master". By gripping the broom alternately, one hand above the other, it was soon determined that Jim should have first choice, "and laughing, crowding, whispering and grimacing, the two schools ranged along opposite walls of the room". There were twenty on either



side and the few remaining in their seats quivered with excitement. The teacher of Sun Prairie took up the spelling book to pronounce the words and the contest was on. One by one the poor spellers were soon eliminated. "Jim and Henry both went down early in the strife". Lincoln and Milton, two Sun Prairie boys, who had frequently been opponents in wrestling matches, now stood side by side to win laurels for their school. "I can't wrestle for shucks", said Lincoln, "but I can spell with any of you." As each word was pronounced, Lincoln could visualize it on the printed page, and he spelled on and on as if he knew no defeat. Gradually Jim's battle line faded away until only Ella Pierce, a slim, homely little girl, remained. Then the Oak Grove teacher took the book confident that his favorite pupil would yet win the contest.

For a time Lincoln and Milton were pitted against little Ella Pierce. To a disinterested observer it might have appeared a bit unfair. But Ella remained undaunted. The hands of the clock moved on. The hour for closing was long past. The sun was lowering in the west. But interest in the contest continued. At length Milton went down on "Cygnet, a young swan", and Lincoln stood alone. Suddenly the teacher took up the dictionary and began to pronounce new and strange words. Lincoln stammered, hesitated, and



went down, but Ella failed on the same word. Technically Oak Grove had won the contest. "School is dismissed" the teacher said, and pandemonium reigned as the two schools were simultaneously released from what had proved to be a well-matched, old-fashioned spelling contest.

And what shall we say of the growth and development of the youth who attended these early Iowa schools — those boys and girls for whom sacrifices were made and who received the benefits of pioneer learning? Many of them were to go farther westward, pioneering all their lives, opening new lands, creating new counties, and helping to establish new States. Many others were to remain in Iowa, to become farmers and housewives, doctors and lawyers and ministers — men and women who should control the affairs of state and pass on to posterity the wholesome influences of noble living. It was a goodly patrimony which these youthful pioneers wrought for the boys and girls of succeeding generations. Iowa youth of to-day are deeply indebted to the youth of other years for the educational advantages, which have become a great superstructure well constructed upon the sure foundations of pioneer learning.

J. A. SWISHER



## The Academy

Long ago the ancient Greeks had a beautiful garden outside the city of Athens. In the garden was a grove and a gymnasium. It was in the midst of this picturesque setting that the philosopher, Plato, met and taught his followers. As the garden had been named in honor of Academus, this meeting place came to be known as the Academy. From Greece the name advanced to western Europe, to England, and thence to America.

In Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, and the New England States the academy flourished at an early date. As the pioneer and the covered wagon moved westward, so the academy advanced to meet the educational needs of the early settlers. Across Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois it came. In Iowa, as in the eastern States, it contributed liberally to culture and learning. With the passage of years it grew and expanded, yielded its fruitage, and finally gave way to the more democratic institution — the public high school. Such, in brief, is the story of the rise and decline of the private academy.

Early education in the eastern States centered around the Latin school, with its selective, classical



subjects — chiefly Latin and Greek — the only purpose of which was to prepare the student for college, where he might pursue studies for the ministry or for leadership in the State. But the pioneer on the frontier needed more practical knowledge. To meet this need the academy — a private or semi-public institution with a practical outlook — was founded.

In such a school the curriculum might include the study of surveying, bookkeeping, modern language, and natural science. Other courses of study, including a classical course, might be offered. For the most part, however, emphasis was placed upon those subjects which were designed to qualify the students to engage in the practical and commonplace duties and activities of life. College entrance requirements were also kept in mind in formulating the course of study.

Enthusiasm for the establishment of academies sometimes overran the demand. In early Iowa many institutions of learning were planned on paper. Some were granted charters by the legislature, but the building program never materialized — paper academies they may well be called. Thus, while Iowa was still a part of the Territory of Wisconsin, an "omnibus statute" provided for the establishment of ten seminaries or academies, seven of which were to be located in what is now



Iowa. Of these seven institutions, however, only one — that established at West Point in Lee County — was ever put into operation. Paper academies were more numerous than those of brick and stone.

An unusually interesting educational experiment developed in connection with the Davenport Manual Labor College which was founded by law in the late thirties and placed under the direction of twenty-two trustees, of whom Antoine Le Claire and George Davenport were the most prominent. This college may have had literary and scientific aims, but its chief purpose was to "qualify young men to engage in the several employments and professions of society, and to discharge honorably and usefully the various duties of life." Provision was made for the purchase of equipment and for the installation of a system of manual labor "in order that the expenses of students might be lessened and at the same time their health promoted". As a safeguard against over capitalization the law provided that the real estate holdings of the school should not at any time exceed six hundred and forty acres of land. This precaution was unnecessary, however, for time proved that, despite the "high sounding title", the wide range of subjects, and the legal provisions, the Davenport Manual Labor College failed to function for



two very practical reasons — lack of students and lack of funds with which to operate.

Despite the failure of many academies, there were others which had a long and continuous record of valuable service. Among these none stands out more prominently than Denmark Academy, the history of which covers a period of nearly seventy years. Incorporated by the Territorial legislature in 1843, its aim from the beginning was to instruct the youth of both sexes "in science and literature." The academy was organized as a stock company, and unlike many of the schools of that day it had a permanent endowment in the form of one-half of all the lots in the town of Denmark — this gift having been made by the proprietors of the town site.

For some years after its incorporation Denmark Academy made little progress and was not widely known. Indeed, it operated chiefly as "a select school for the village." The low, one-story building in which it was housed served not only for academic work, but for church services and public assemblies as well. There it was that the first Congregational church in Iowa was founded. There, too, Asa Turner, a leading pioneer minister, preached for many years, and there the famous Iowa Band was ordained in 1843. Five years after this date a new stone building was erected —



"a neat two story structure, twenty-eight by forty seven feet", which was used by the Academy for many years.

The school was opened in 1845. Seven years later it had but eighteen students, only one of whom resided outside the community of Denmark. During the year 1852, under the leadership of Rev. Henry K. Edson, there was a phenomenal growth — the yearly attendance rapidly mounting to ninety. From that time forth Denmark Academy was a potent factor in the educational program of southeastern Iowa. The institution was described as being located in "a quiet, healthy place, and secure from the temptations incident to our large towns". In a community possessed of "an intelligent society and high moral tone," it was "just the kind of a school to which parents would wish to send their children."

The classical department was designed, so it was declared, to equip the student with a thorough knowledge of the principles of the languages and to create an interest in classical authors; and it was asserted that with two or three years instruction at the Academy a student would be prepared to enter any of the colleges in the country. Furthermore, a "superior set of Philosophical Apparatus" was owned by the Academy so that instruction in the natural sciences might be demonstrated by illus-



trations and experiments. It appears, too, that special training was offered to those desiring to become teachers, inasmuch as there were available instructors who were said to have had "much experience in this difficult art."

Although the Academy was not a boarding school, parents were assured that "those in charge would maintain a watchful care over all persons under their instruction," and if desired the principal would assume special supervision of students. The daily recitations were to include instruction in morals and correct habits of life, while lessons from the Bible were given as a weekly exercise. Finally, all students were expected to attend service on the Sabbath, and by the rules of the institution they were forbidden to indulge in "profanity, card-playing, or dancing."

In 1865 the Academy reached its highest point in attendance, when two hundred and seventy students from fifteen States and Territories were registered. The Academy building was then found to be "too straight for the numbers that sought admission", and two years later a more commodious building was erected at a cost of \$17,000. Of this sum \$11,000 was contributed by the citizens of the town of Denmark.

For fifty years Denmark Academy contributed liberally to the educational development of Iowa,



and many of its alumni were prominent in educational and civic affairs throughout the State. With the establishment of the public high schools, however, attendance at the Academy gradually diminished, and the school again came to be, for the most part, a local institution. At last, when a new high school building was erected in 1912, the name Denmark Academy High School was adopted and the Academy as such passed into history.

Other academies there were, in Iowa, very similar in character and influence to Denmark Academy. Among these were Howe's Academy at Mount Pleasant; Mechanics' Academy, McClain's Academy, and Willis's Academy of Iowa City; Cedar Valley Seminary at Osage, the Prairie Home Seminary at Waterloo, and many others.

The teachers of those early days were able, aggressive, and versatile. A student in one of the early Iowa academies in referring to his "professor" in later years said: "He kept everyone wide awake all the time. His long suit was fish, not to eat but to use as bait for arithmetic. He was liable to stop morning devotions to ask how much a fish would weigh whose tail was twice as long as its body. And when he was not working fish, he rolled in butter balls on us. How much would a six inch butter ball weigh, if a three inch ball weighed so much?"



Frequently the compensation of the teacher was dependent upon the number of pupils enrolled. Accordingly, efforts were made not only to obtain new pupils but to encourage and interest those already enrolled. Nor was this entirely a selfish motive for an advancement of personal culture and a development of the school meant a lifting of the entire community to a higher level.

Schools organized especially for girls were not uncommon in Iowa in the decades of the fifties and sixties. These were sometimes called academies, but, perhaps more frequently, institutes or seminaries. In 1853 Catherine Beecher, a sister of Henry Ward Beecher and of Harriet Beecher Stowe, visited Dubuque for the purpose of establishing an institution for the education of women. Out of this movement Dubuque Female Seminary developed. Miss Beecher visited the city again in 1855 and pledged \$20,000 toward an endowment fund, subject to certain conditions. The conditions were not carried out, however, and the gift was not received.

The most elaborate plan for feminine education in Iowa in those early days was to be found at the Female Eclectic Institute at Davenport, which advertised as essentially *sui generis* — the only one of its kind — and which was in fact without model elsewhere. The aim was to include in the curricu-



lum "everything that rightfully belonged to education". Two distinct aims, however, were emphasized — "the preparation for independent support" and "training for domestic life". This was a new adventure in western culture. There was no precedent for such courses, and it was necessary for the Institute "to make provisions for instruction theretofore unavailable". Particular attention was called to the practice in English composition, since it was recognized that woman was "to a great extent shut out from the rostrum and confined to the parlor or school room." To make herself heard beyond these limits it was necessary for her to be well trained in the use of the pen: by no other means could she make an impression upon the public or transmit her ideas to future generations.

Detailed specifications of what was required of students was sometimes set forth in catalogs. Mount Pleasant Female Seminary, established in 1863, required that each student have "an English dictionary, an atlas, and a Bible", as well as an umbrella, a pair of thick-soled shoes and part of the furnishings of a room, "including a carpet if desired". Parents were requested not to furnish expensive articles of jewelry and dress, and it was particularly pointed out that "*Confectionaries and such eatables are contraband as detrimental to health*" for they "breed discontent and sickness



among the Pupils and bring increased care, anxiety and labor for the Teachers." Moreover, young women were not to be entrusted with money for the purchase of books, it being advised that funds for that purpose be deposited with the principal.

The conduct of students was also closely guarded. No visiting was allowed on Sunday. Gentlemen, except fathers and brothers, were in no instance permitted to call without special permission. All students living out of town were expected to board at the institution, so that they might "enjoy the constant care, example and society of their Teachers." All students were required to attend Bible classes and church services at some place designated by the parents or at a particular church with the principal.

As early as 1856, D. Franklin Wells pointed out the educational and economic advantages of publicly controlled schools. He was looking forward, he said, to the time when the people generally would perceive that public schools should be encouraged and supported until they become "good enough for the richest and cheap enough for the poorest". In this regard Professor Wells was a prophet. It was several years before his dream came true, but in the end the public high school developed, and the doors of the historic private academy were forever closed.

J. A. SWISHER



## The High School

Let us assume that it is commencement day at the high school. Youth and vigor and inspiration are everywhere apparent. Many boys and girls are graduating who in the years ahead will be leaders in home and school and church and State. Who knows? One of these lads may become our banker. Another may preach our sermons, present our cause in the courts of law, or represent us in the halls of Congress. One of them may stand watchfully at our bedside as a fever rages, or at the operating table he may alleviate pain through the skillful use of the surgeon's knife. One of the girls may become a Florence Allen, a Jane Addams, or a Florence Nightingale of the twentieth century. More probably, these boys and girls will pursue the humbler walks of life, but surely they will contribute their full share to wholesome living in the community in which they reside. Their high school education has been a profitable investment. It will pay large dividends. The youth of to-day may be congratulated upon their educational opportunities.

But whence came the high school? It did not spring full fledged into being. Rather, it is the



result of a gradual evolution, development, and growth through the period of three hundred years. Beginning with the tiny seeds of culture in New England long ago, it has grown and blossomed abundantly. It has expanded onward, outward, and ever westward until the fragrance of its flower and fruitage has covered the land from sea to sea. On April 13, 1635, the freemen of Boston passed an order that "our brother Philemon Pormont shall be entreated to become schoolmaster for the teaching and nurturing of the children with us". This marks the beginning of the Boston Latin School — the first school for secondary education in America.

The Latin School, as the name implies, was an institution where the sons of the well-to-do might study Latin and the classics in preparation for college and the pursuit of the learned professions. With the passage of the years there was an increased demand for higher education and the establishment of additional free public schools for the rich and the poor alike. In 1821 a new educational standard was attained, when the Boston High School was established to provide at public expense an education that would fit the children of that community "for active life" as well as entrance to college.

Just as elementary education, the academy, and



the college moved westward with the pioneer, so also the high school advanced to extend opportunities of secondary education to the youth of the common folk on the western prairie. Soon after the middle of the nineteenth century the high school crossed the Mississippi River and became a part of the public educational equipment of Iowa.

In 1849 the school laws of Iowa, which had hitherto dealt only with elementary education, were supplemented to provide for the establishment of "a school of a higher grade". But legislation alone does not produce public sentiment, and the time was not yet ripe for the establishment of such schools. Thomas H. Benton, Jr., who was the Superintendent of Public Instruction, together with other educational leaders continued to encourage the development of higher education. Probably the first community in Iowa to respond to this influence was district number one of Bloomington Township in Muscatine County, which in 1851 erected a new building and began to expand its program. Five years later some pupils of Muscatine were examined at the end of a term in algebra, geometry, astronomy, physiology, and history, and in addition had received instruction in natural philosophy and bookkeeping.

Tipton pioneered in Iowa public education by starting a "high school" in 1856 — the same year in



which the first high school was established in Chicago, and the year in which the first high school building was erected in Saint Louis. This new school was known as the Tipton Union School, and was under the leadership of C. C. Nestlerode, a native of Ohio, who, in later years, played an important rôle in the development of public education in Iowa. In 1858 thirteen of the original pupils in the Tipton Union School finished the prescribed course of study. If commencement had been in vogue in those early days, this would have been the first class to have graduated from an Iowa high school.

In Dubuque as early as 1856 plans were under way for the development of public secondary education, and a full four-year course of study was outlined. It appears, however, that no immediate action was taken as a result of this plan. Two years later provisions for elementary education in that city were pronounced "magnificent". To supplement this work the board of education encouraged secondary education and revised the plan already projected for higher instruction. At that time a three-year course of study was outlined, and on May 17, 1858, a high school department was opened in that city. The subjects offered included higher arithmetic, English history, Latin, algebra, geometry, bookkeeping, English composi-



tion, natural philosophy, physiology, botany, and it is not without interest to note that German, Greek, and French were offered as optional courses.

Within the first decade of high school development in Iowa a widespread interest was manifested. Substantial courses of study were provided in various parts of the State — at Mount Pleasant, Burlington, and Iowa City. There were, however, comparatively few high schools in Iowa prior to the Civil War. Graduates from the Springdale Seminary, reorganized as a public school in 1866, were among the first to be admitted to the State University without examination.

In the early stages of high school development it was thought that there would eventually be one high school in each county. Indeed, in 1858 a law was passed which provided for county high schools, whenever the population and educational needs seemed to warrant their establishment. Two or three such schools were projected, but were never fully organized. In 1870, a more definite county high school law was enacted, and one high school — that of Guthrie County at Panora — was opened in 1876. This single example of a county high school in Iowa continued to function and to exert a wholesome influence in its local sphere for a period of more than fifty years. It



was discontinued in 1930, whereupon the Panora school district assumed the function of providing a high school and occupied the buildings formerly used for the county high school.

The real development in public secondary education, however, has been through the school district system. Upon the simple but sure foundations laid in 1849 more than nine hundred and fifty high schools have developed in Iowa. All but sixty-six of them offer a regular four-year course of instruction. The number of high schools which have been established in the several counties varies from one to fourteen per county, depending upon the size and population of the area. There are two counties, each of which has but one four-year high school. Four counties, however, have as many as fourteen high schools. A typical Iowa county has nine high schools, each offering a four-year course of study. There are now approximately as many high schools in Iowa as there are cities and towns.

It is gratifying that, as a great agricultural State, Iowa has done much to extend high school facilities to rural communities. In this development the consolidated school has had an important part. The first consolidated school in Iowa was established at Buffalo Center in 1896. There are now nearly four hundred consolidated schools,



most of which maintain well equipped high schools. Usually the school is located in town, with both rural and urban areas being consolidated into a single district. In a few cases the school is established in the open country — the district being composed entirely of a rural area. In either case transportation is usually provided for pupils who live more than two miles from the school. Thus high schools in consolidated districts have done much to make educational opportunities for farm boys and girls equal to those enjoyed by their city cousins.

The development of the high school has not always been accompanied by a brilliant display of colors or the militant sound of advancing footsteps. The movement for many years was gradual, yet constantly forward and ever progressive. From the close of the Civil War to the turn of the century there was a wide-spread interest in secondary education throughout the State. But with that advancement there was still much to be gained. In 1905 only forty per cent of the public school children lived in districts maintaining high schools. Of this forty per cent of school population, 32,000 pupils were in high school. From the remaining sixty per cent, 7000 pupils enjoyed the privileges of public secondary education by the payment of tuition in other districts.



By 1910 high school enrollment had increased to 45,000, about one-fifth of whom were tuition students. During the following year free secondary schooling was made available for every child in Iowa, upon completion of the elementary course of study. The free-tuition law of 1911 was a great boon to secondary education. It was the signal for a further advancement. Twenty-one years after its passage high school enrollment had mounted to more than 153,000 — an increase of more than 240 per cent. The number of high schools in Iowa in 1910 was 406, many of them comparatively small. By 1934 the number had increased to 953 — the average enrollment per school having been likewise greatly augmented. The coming of the high school, at first attended with little display, has on the whole been impressive. In 1856 there seems to have been only one public high school with scarcely more than a dozen pupils. To-day there is an average of more than nine high schools for each county, and the boys and girls enrolled in them are sufficient in number to constitute a city larger than Des Moines.

If there has been a phenomenal growth in the number of schools and enrollment, there has been a growth of almost equal significance within the school itself. Once the interest of the student centered around the classics — a school for the select.



Then the curriculum was broadened to include algebra, geometry, bookkeeping, physiology, and natural philosophy. Later courses were developed in agriculture, manual training, domestic science, art, and a multitude of subjects formerly unknown — all of which are valuable and essential in the program of a modern high school.

And what shall we say of the extra-curricular activities — athletics, dramatics, debating, and music? What is high school without football, basketball, a pep club, dramatics, a band and orchestra, the 4-H Club, and all the rest? Without these a high school would not be a well-rounded and thoroughly equipped training school in which to prepare for the activities of life. Many are the contests lost and won, many are the lessons learned in these extra-curricular interests. Such activities are a part of school. They add much that is of interest, and contribute much to the preparation for wholesome living.

Iowa high schools, for the most part, are well provided with buildings — many of which are elaborate and beautiful. The records show, however, that this has not always been true. Indeed, many of the early schools were very poorly equipped. In 1872 William M. Bryant, Superintendent of Schools at Burlington, said that conditions were not "altogether satisfactory" in the



public high school there. The teachers he believed were unjustly criticised for things over which they had no control. The building, he said, was "exceedingly ill-adapted" to the needs of the school. Its location was "very unfavorable". On one side was a rough street along which passed a constant procession of heavily loaded wagons. On the other side was a railroad track where trains and switch engines rushed by within less than a hundred yards of the school. There was no suitable playground near the building and "the surroundings were anything else than attractive to the eye". The building had originally been erected for church purposes, and the large hall in which the pupils assembled seemed to have been designed to enable its occupants "to make the greatest possible amount of noise with the least possible exertion". The floor was likened to "the stretched head of a large drum". Even the most careful movements of the pupils produced much noise, which resounded again and again "in a prolonged succession of echoes".

But that was many years ago. We are now living in a new era. A modern Iowa high school building is spacious and beautiful. Its large, well-equipped class rooms, its auditorium, laboratories, and gymnasium, its inward conveniences and outward beauty make it a joy to teachers and students



and patrons alike. Designed by a master mind, constructed by skillful hands, equipped with modern appliances, surrounded with wholesome influences, and dedicated to a lofty purpose, it subordinates things material to that which is cultural, and rivals all other buildings in the city in widespread community interest. In many Iowa communities the high school building towers above all others in architectural structure. In many ways it is the best that the community affords.

Three hundred years have now passed since the founding of the Boston Latin School. Three hundred years of history have been written. Meanwhile secondary education has made wonderful advancement. It has moved ever westward. The course of study has been enriched and expanded to meet modern needs. School buildings — thousands of them elaborate and beautiful — have been erected and maintained. But one may ask, what constitutes a high school? Not great massive walls of brick and stone, not modern appliances, elaborate equipment, large gymnasias, and spacious playgrounds, although these are essential; but youth, high minded, enthusiastic, cultured youth, and also those who teach and guide and plan and work. These are they who make our schools and revel in the making.

J. A. SWISHER



## Comment by the Editor

### *EDUCATIONAL DEMOCRACY*

The growth of democracy in America has been closely associated with the progress of free public schools. If the people are to rule wisely, they must not be kept in ignorance. The founding of the Boston Latin School three hundred years ago was a manifestation of that principle. When Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Ordinance of 1787, "Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged", he was expressing an idea already well established.

While the necessity for "common school" education was generally recognized, higher schools were open only to people who could afford to pay for the privilege. Even Jefferson, democrat that he was, thought that three years of free schooling would be enough for all children. Only boys "of best genius", in his opinion, were entitled to more advanced education at public expense. Ability, like wealth, was thus tentatively suggested as a legitimate basis of educational opportunity.

The pioneers who came to Iowa believed in



equalitarian democracy. All children, they thought, deserved education to the limit of their capacity. From the beginning, schools were maintained by general taxation. As early as 1858, communities were encouraged by law to establish free public high schools. Upon completion of the elementary subjects, every boy and girl in such a district was challenged to accept the opportunity of more advanced study. Residence, ability, and ambition were the qualifications, irrespective of family and fortune.

While private academies declined, public high schools grew in number and size. Over 4000 students graduated in 1910, yet only about two-fifths of the school population lived in districts that maintained high schools. Finally, in 1911, the privilege of free high school training was extended to all children regardless of residence. Attendance soared upward. More high schools were provided. Last year 25,100 boys and girls graduated from Iowa high schools.

If the success of political democracy depends upon democracy in education, Iowa ought to be well governed.

J. E. B.



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